

Violet and Daisy, Successors to Siamese Twins

THE recent death of the famous "Siamese Twins" has aroused considerable speculation as to their successors. For, like Presidents, all notable human institutions must have successors.

Already the scientists and those who were over curious about the phenomenon of two sisters bound together so that while their personalities were separate, physically they were almost one, are giving their attention to two sixteen-year-old girls—or are they one sixteen-year-old girl?—Violet and Daisy Hilton, whose home is in San Antonio, Texas.

These two undoubtedly will replace in the public mind Rosa and Josefa, who have just died. Their bodies are joined together at the base of the spine just as those of the "Siamese Twins." In this respect their abnormality is identical with that of Eng and Chang, the original Siamese Twins, who actually were natives of Siam and whom Barnum made famous in the last century.

More remarkable, however, than Rosa and Josefa, Violet and Daisy are, with the exception of the joining of their bodies, two distinctly separate young women. Violet, whose hair is dark, is inclined to be quiet, is quite often moody and has no use for the attentions of the opposite sex. On the other hand, Daisy, who is almost a blonde, is very vivacious, has, it is said, several admirers and is declared to be an outrageous flirt.

Remarkably interesting is the fact that this true pair of young ladies are proficient dancers. One cannot move unless the other follows, one may never go where the other is not along. In fact, one could not take a step unless the other steps also. And yet they have learned to dance so skillfully that they are never without dancing partners. Of course, they can have but one partner at a time—one for the two of them. But they have a way of twining their arms around this fortunate young man in such a way that they can go through all the figures just as lively as if there were only one pair of feet instead of two pair keeping step with the male dancing partner.

Violet is very fond of cards, checkers and dominoes. Daisy cares very little for either of these games, but does occasionally enjoy a game of auction bridge. With their admirers opposite them they frequently play separate games, Daisy playing bridge, Violet playing checkers.

Both girls like to read and both are fond



The Misses Violet and Daisy Hilton of San Antonio, Tex., who are the successors of Rosa and Josefa, the "Siamese Twins" who died recently. The Misses Hilton, who are 16 years old, are physically formed just as were Rosa and Josefa. They are normal girls and enjoy many games in common. Their parents have refused to allow them to go before the public.

of the movies. Each of them writes an entirely different handwriting from the other. They romp and play around the grounds of their cozy home in Fort Worth just as much as any children, and in fact are much sought after as playmates by the other young girls of the neighborhood. They move about with marvelous dexterity.

The twins have been educated by private tutors, their parents having refused to send them to public school because of the comment their condition might call forth. The twins are healthy and, except for their physical misfortune, are normal and happy. Both are very bright at their studies and both take an extreme interest in history.

They have not attracted much attention in the scientific world because of the prominence of Rosa and Josefa, who, having so

often traveled with the circus, were known throughout the world. Already offers of a very enticing nature have been made to the parents of Violet and Daisy by circus owners and even vaudeville managers. The parents, however, have firmly refused even the most generous of these proposals. They declare that they will never allow their daughters to become public "freaks."

As in the case of Rosa and Josefa, surgeons hesitate to perform the only operation which would separate the two girls. They are certain that death immediately would ensue.

So far as is known Daisy and Violet are the only examples left of the abnormality which first attracted attention to the original Siamese Twins and then repeated itself in Rosa and Josefa. There are many misshapen pairs of twins, and some are so curious as to make them attractive to the owners of circuses and side shows, but as a rule they are not in such condition that an operation is forbidden.

Scientific investigators already are asking permission to make methodical study of Daisy and Violet. The death of Rosa and Josefa and the recalling of the events of their extraordinary life seem to have reawakened scientific interest in this phenomenon of nature. These students have asked, however, that the mother, Mrs. Hilton, be included also in their investigations.

It is believed that many twins of different degrees of physical abnormality might be found in Siam. It has been reported by visitors to that country who have remained there long periods that twins joined together physically are a not uncommon occurrence. The same is true of Java, Burma and Jahore.

Daisy and Violet have a sister and a brother who are normal in all respects. The brother is older and the sister younger.

The principal ambition of the two girls is to travel. They have, of course, read a great deal about Rosa and Josefa and have been fascinated by the adventures of these two. They have repeatedly begged their parents to permit them to accept some of the many offers made to exhibit them, their plea being that they are not sensitive and that they might as well be earning the money which would permit them to visit foreign lands.

The parents, however, are most sensitive. They have said they will not permit the two girls to become "public freaks."

The Stuff Dreams Are Made Of.



London "Sketch."

(Drawn by G. E. Studdy.)

"I've heard a lot about the stuff that dreams are made of. I've heard my mistress say she dreams of ermine wraps. I've heard my master say he dreams of bottles that the corks pop out of. Funny things to dream about, if you ask me. Now here's a good, sensible dream. A chap by the name of Conan Doyle had this photograph taken, and I don't know how he did it because when I woke up it wasn't there, but here's the picture anyway. It's the kind of stuff I like dreams to be made of. See you again next Sunday."

The Strange Murder Mystery Which Has Aroused All Rome

New York Herald Bureau, Rome, April 28.

IN the Rome Court of Assizes a blind man is on trial for his life. The authorities declare that four years ago he murdered his wife. But for four years this blind man has amazingly defied the authorities to prove it.

Ignazio Mesones, the accused, is becoming the Landru of Italy, and the "Mystery of the Lungotevere Marzio," as Rome has called the case for four years, is developing into one of the strangest cases in criminal records.

The mystery was born before dawn January 4, 1918, when Emilio Metri, walking along the Lungotevere Marzio toward the Tiber, saw on the ground, the dim outlines of a body. Approaching he discovered the form to be that of a young woman, prone on the cobblestones, her arms straight down at her sides. There was a hole in her temple, where the blood had clotted. By her side was a revolver, an umbrella and a purse. She had been dead for several hours.

The police discovered calling cards and letters in the woman's handbag, all in the name Maria Rotellini. There was no money in the purse and the girl was rather poorly dressed.

Two or three hotelkeepers in the neighborhood of the Lungotevere Marzio, which is not a good neighborhood at any hour of the day, identified the corpse as that of a girl from Udine, who had patronized their hotels during the three or four days before.

The girl was buried as a suicide. At the time this obscure little tragedy was occurring, a wealthy Roman, the Commendatore Attilio Simonetti, and his wife began seeking their daughter Bice, who had brought a great sorrow into their lives. When she was 15 she had fallen under the spell of a strange man, Ignazio Mesones, half Peruvian, half Italian, who was then nearly 40 and who had come to live in their house to recover from a career of dissipation. This Mesones had moved in every circle of society, from the highest to the lowest, and had an ugly reputation. Even then he was going blind.

But the girl was fascinated. In later years her parents protested, as this fascination continued, but she was not to be influenced. Just before she became of age she risked her fortune and reputation and eloped with Mesones. Her parents then consented to their marriage.

It was bad enough for the Simonettis to see their daughter married to a blind man with not the best reputation, but the tragedy did not end there. Mesones, after his marriage, continued to see Maria de Angelis, who formerly had been associated

with him. He openly taunted Bice with this woman's name, telling her he had only married her for her money. The bolder he became the more Bice became devoted to him. She obeyed her husband in even most minute things. Then, just before New Year's Day, 1918, she disappeared. Mesones went to her parents.

"Your daughter is a heartless creature," he said. "She has deserted me because I am blind and has gone to America with another."

He drew from his pocket a letter, written unmistakably by Bice and postmarked Naples. The letter confirmed what he had said. Later a Lieut. Barker, a friend of Mesones, who had been in Naples, told them he had seen their daughter there in company with another man.

But the parents were haunted by the thought that all was not as reported in their daughter's disappearance. "How could she make such a fool of herself over Mesones for seven years then leave him overnight?" they asked.

In July they succeeded in having Mesones taken before the police. He produced witnesses. Nothing could be proved against him. But the Commendatore still was suspicious. He offered a reward of 40,000 lire for information as to the whereabouts of his daughter. Nobody had information to furnish.

It was not until 1920 that a young private detective, Vittorio Pellegrini, while sitting in the office of Emilio Benucci, a friend of the blind man, heard him make casual reference to Bice Simonetti. Something in the way Benucci spoke was suspicious, Pellegrini, who had been working for some time on the case, thought deeply. The next time he saw his friend he suddenly produced a photograph of the young woman, whose body had been found by the police as mentioned above. The detective asked his acquaintance if he recognized "in this portrait—the portrait of a dead person—the face of the missing girl."

"It's Bice Simonetti, without a doubt," said Benucci off his guard. He confessed that Maria de Angelis, the woman in whom Mesones was interested, had told him Mesones murdered his wife, whom he had in some mysterious way disguised so that as "Maria Rotellini" she would not be identified as Bice.

That was enough for the police. They exhumed the body of the supposed suicide and she was promptly identified as their daughter by the Simonettis. The police then reversed their suicide verdict and declared it probable Bice had been murdered where her body was discovered. The letter signed Rotellini, found in the handbag, was identified as being in Bice's

handwriting, as also was the letter from Naples.

Bice had been murdered; that was clear. But by whom? Mesones had been totally blind many months. How could a blind man so expertly shoot a woman in the temple?

The police could not explain this, but they took Mesones to prison. A little later they arrested Maria de Angelis. For two years the authorities prepared their case.

Now Mesones and Maria de Angelis have been brought into court, with Lieut. Barbero and Benucci, suspected as accomplices.

Rome is intensely interested in the trial. Many women who remember the gallant, debonaire Mesones of other days sympathize with him now that he is blind.

What could be more poignant, they ask, to minds weary of melodramatic movies than the romance of Mesones? A man of the world, with the tang of the adventurer, who went to Russia in 1909 and returned with his pockets full of rubles and diamonds; a wizard at cards; a man who could win any woman, he pleased? Day after day in the crowded court room they see this man, who merely smiles at the revelations against him, who is never cornered by the most convincing evidence nor given pause by the most pitiless questions. And when the women meet outside the court room they say:

"They'll never convict Mesones," and there is hope in their voices. "He's too fine and clever for them, and how can they ever prove that a blind man could shoot with a revolver so unerringly?"

The men discuss the fine legal points of the trial.

Across the broad stone corridor of the Palazzo di Giustizia, where the trial is held, stretches a double line of swanky, blue clad soldiers. The little room soon is crowded and then none may pass the lines, but the corridors are filled all day with persons hoping to get in.

Mesones sits in a cage in the court room. There is something oddly childlike in the curve of his slight figure as he perches on the broad canvas steps of his cage. His shaven and well shaped head is gray.

In the corner of the cage, with her back to the audience, Maria sits, her head huddled into her furs. A most elaborate guard, in vermilion and black, with a long saber, keeps guard over these two interested listeners. The fat procurator-general sits with his chin in his hands, his tasseled cap jocularly to one side. The president of the court, who resembles somewhat a nervous hawk, keeps the scarlet mantled clerk dashing here and there to keep order.

Mesones has come into court with one of the strongest cases possible against him, and with only his blindness as a defense.

Attorney Gregoriachi, for the State, is continually referring to Mesones's statements in jail. These are damaging.

On February 4, 1920, he said to one of the prison authorities:

"I felt toward Bice as if she were my sister, but for Maria I had a great passion. I wished to go away with her, but I had squandered my money. So I decided to marry Bice, who had promised me half her inheritance."

A year later he said, the police declare:

"It is true that I killed Bice with a revolver on the Lungotevere Marzio the night of January 3. While she was at my side I shot her through the temple. I felt her slipping to the ground. I heard a carriage coming. I threw beside her the revolver and her purse, which I had in my hands. Then I ran away. All the time I felt that I was doing the most natural thing in the world. I was completely blind at the time, but I did this without the help of any one."

There were other damaging statements. Confronted by them Mesones merely smiles and produces witnesses who say that he underwent periods of insanity in the prison in which he did not recognize his mother or his lawyer. He also has witnesses to testify that at least one "confession" was wrung from him because he believed his mother had been arrested and would be convicted unless he could clear her. He even has letters written in prison to his mother on strips of cardboard to show how much he cared for her.

If Mesones's testimony has produced complication within complication, he has at least cleared up one mystery. He has explained how it was that Bice assumed the disguise as Maria Rotellini which kept him out of jail for two years after her murder. This revelation was one of the most startling of the whole trial.

He testified that Bice knew many women were enamored of him. This knowledge Mesones played upon. He finally persuaded Bice that Maria, at least, must be killed and that since he was blind she must commit the crime. He arranged with her the elaborate Rotellini disguise, which involved going about for three days from one cheap Rome hotel to another, that she might be seen in her disguise. He even persuaded her to turn over to him the legal administration of her affairs—"In case of accident."

At the very time the gently born Bice began her strange masquerade Maria was enjoying the Riviera.

Maria de Angelis was a sorry witness when she came out of her cage, with bent head, to the witness stand. From the time she was 13 she had been an adventuress. Her only redeeming feature seemed to be her love for her little son Giacomino. She was compelled to admit she had slapped

Bice on the cheek as the latter came out of the church on her wedding day.

The day of Maria's testimony struck one of the dramatic notes of the trial. Hatreds snarled out in open court. Faced with Benucci, Maria sneered at him, as had the State's lawyer, who called him a "sack of mud." She accused Benucci of trying to extort money from Mesones and herself. Benucci accused her of betraying him.

Little Stella Ianella, the girl who guided the blind Mesones about the streets, testified that she first saw him when she was 12 years old and was helping her mother in a tobacco shop near St. Peter's. Mesones was not blind then. Two or three years later he came to her mother's shop with Maria. Then in the fall of 1917 she saw him with another woman, who, he said, was his wife.

After Bice's disappearance Stella said that Mesones gave her a wedding ring, some bracelets and several documents to keep for him.

"Didn't you suspect anything when you saw the wedding ring?" asked Gregoriachi.

"I was only a child, I didn't understand those things," she said.

Stella testified that Mesones had wanted to marry her. When she asked him about his wife he said: "Oh, I'll get a divorce."

She made an important statement when she testified that after she had seen Mesones talking to a group of rough looking men he had said to her: "Those men would kill a person for a hundred lire."

The dramatic moment in her testimony came when Stella was faced with the evidence of the woman superintendent of the building in which she lives with her mother that upon the arrest of Mesones in 1920 Stella had told her she knew all the details of the murder and had proceeded to describe them before they had been published.

The police officers, Costa and Cannada, had overheard this recital.

Stella became very nervous, tearing her hat to pieces between nervous little fingers. Suddenly she fainted, after crying out that Mesones's friends had tortured her.

Georgette Mendoca, daughter of a prominent family, was a more attractive witness—slim, blond, dressed in an expensive tailor with fur at neck and cuff. She spoke in low, well modulated tones that revealed her aristocratic breeding. She took the judge's jokes at the artificiality of her blond hair cheerfully.

For a year and a half, she said, she had known the Lieutenant Barbero, and also had known Mesones and Bice. The four used to have dinner together in the

Restaurant Romoletto. New Year's Eve they went to Mesones's house for something to drink and missed Bice. Georgette said she thought it was strange for her friend to go away without saying farewell to anybody, but she believed Mesones's declaration that Bice had disappeared. Later she confessed to accepting some of Bice's clothes as a present from Mesones, even a white fox fur, of which Bice had been very fond.

Everybody leaned forward when Georgette described going to the station with Mesones and Barbero, when the latter was leaving for his home in Sicily. Mesones gave Barbero a letter to post in Naples, but Georgette declared that she did not know its contents. The State declares this was the letter supposed to have been mailed by Bice. She held out stoutly against attempts of the prosecution to wring from her the names of her father and mother. She would only say what was apparent, that her family was of the nobility.

Then the prosecution played a strong card. It produced a man who was believed to have been almost an eyewitness to the murder on the Lungotevere Marzio. This man, Andrea Buratti, testified that he had seen a girl walking toward the Tiber the night of January 3, and that soon after she turned the corner he heard a pistol shot. He rushed to the spot, saw the body lying on the ground and two men and a woman running up the steps from the river, as if they might have shot her from the ambush of the river wall, and were escaping.

Then the defense produced physicians' reports to show that this witness was epileptic.

Most of the evidence sheers away from Mesones's bent head in the same startling way. He himself cheerfully winds up the mazes into even worse knots. One day he will say that his theory of the case is that Bice shot herself because she was desperately jealous of Maria. The next he amazes his audience by declaring solemnly:

"Sometimes I think that Bice is not dead at all. I believe this is all a plot against me. How can I, a blind man, know that Rotellini was really my wife?" And as the audience shivers, he repeats, "No. Sometimes I think Bice will come back and show us that this whole trial is a silly nightmare."

Rome has not had such an interesting or dramatic murder mystery in many years. There pass in review during each day so many phases of the mysterious life of the "other half," with its loves and jealousies and beautiful women. Rome loves the very memory of the little wife whose specter inhabits the court room day after day—yet so many of the women of Rome secretly hope Mesones will go free.